

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

11 January 2022

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Question from: Cllr Ian Thorn

To Councillors :

Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health & Wellbeing and Interim Cabinet Member responsible for Finance & Procurement, Commissioning and Commercialisation

Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change

Question 1 – (22-002)

How much has Wiltshire Council spent on defending planning appeals (including written reps, hearings, enquiries) in this financial year?

Response:

Internal costs (of staff, venues, etc.) associated with appeals are absorbed within normal Service costs. External costs (of legal representatives, expert witnesses, etc.) for 'local inquiries' and 'hearings' held so far in the current financial year are c.£200k. External costs for further local inquiries and hearings scheduled in the current financial year are predicted to be c.£115k-£175k.

Additional question and extract from the Cabinet minutes for the meeting on 11 Jan 22: (22-021)

'In response to Question 22-002 Councillor Ian Thorn sought details of how much the council had spent on defending planning appeals in previous financial years. It was agreed a written response would be provided.'

Response

Internal costs (of staff, venues, etc.) associated with appeals in previous financial years were absorbed within normal Service costs. External costs (of legal representatives, expert witnesses, etc.) for 'local inquiries' and 'hearings' held in the past four years are as follows –

2017/18 – c. £230k

2018/19 – c. £190k

2019/20 – c. £69k

2020/21 – c. £231k

Question 3 – (22-004)

How much has Wiltshire Council spent on the market towns initiative (£1 million per year (political) initiative) agreed at the February budget meeting in this financial year?

Response:

Forecast spend for 21/22 from the Wiltshire Towns Fund currently stands at £0.475m.

The recent announcement of further business support through the Omnicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant, as well as the addition to the Additional Restrictions Fund will likely mean the majority of spend from the 21/22 allocation from the Wiltshire Towns recovery budget will occur in 22/23. This response funding will take precedence in terms of staff resource.

Prior to the Omicron emergence, an underspend of £0.525m had been forecast against Wiltshire Towns recovery budget for 21/22. This is largely due to the number of grant funded programmes being prioritised for spend alongside the Council's investment, namely the Local Restrictions Grant, Restart Grants and Additional Restrictions Grant programme. It has been recommended that any underspend on Towns Recovery budget is moved into an ear-marked reserve for future initiatives.

Officers are still seeking to maximise use of the funding in 21/22.

Additional question and extract from the Cabinet minutes for the meeting on 11 Jan 22 (22-022):

'In response to Question 22-004 Councillor Thorn requested a breakdown of the costs from the Wiltshire Towns Fund be provided in a written response.'

Response:

Projected spend for the Wiltshire Towns Fund is broken down as follows:

Source	Activity	Envelope	Rationale
Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	Heritage Tourism Activity	£80,000	Directly supporting footfall increase

Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	What's on in Wiltshire Programme	£100,000	Directly supporting footfall increase
Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	Opportunity Site Development and Master-planning	£100,000	Necessary pipeline development work which enables future successful external funding bids
Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	Support for evidence base for Levelling Up / UKSPF	£60,000	Sets agenda for Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Fund
Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	Flexible Workspace In Town Centres	£50,000	Increasing town centre diverse usage
Wiltshire Towns Fund	Inward Investment Strategy review/update - direction post-EU funding, ambition & opportunity, structure	£10,000	Strategic package of works needed to link to Plan for Growth and respond to changes in work patterns
Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	Employment land – evidence and scope for future sites	£25,000	Strategic package of works needed to link to Plan for Growth
Wiltshire Towns Fund 21/22	Delivery Support	£50,000	Engagement across all town centres